

Message Text

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ACTION SS-25

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FM AMEMBASSY PANAMA
TO SECSTATE WASHDC IMMEDIATE 1137

C O N F I D E N T I A L SECTION 1 OF 2 PANAMA 1982

EXDIS

FOR AMBASSADOR BUNKER AND LINOWITZ FROM JORDEN

PLEASE PASS COPY TO OFFICE OF SECRETARY OF THE ARMY FOR
ALEXANDER

E.O. 11652: GDS
TAGS: PFOR, PN
SUBJECT: TALK WITH TORRIJOS

1. SUMMARY. FOLLOWING REPORTS ON TALK AMONG GENERAL OMAR
TORRIJOS, ARMY SECRETARY CLIFFORD ALEXANDER AND MYSELF ON CONTADORA
FRIDAY. KEY ELEMENT WAS TORRIJOS PLEDGE TO ACCEPT SOME FORM OF
BILATERAL SECURITY ASSURANCE IN POST-TREATY PERIOD IN EXCHANGE
FOR WHICH HE REQUIRES THAT US BE MORE FORTHCOMING ON MATTERS OF
DEEPEST TO HIM AND PANAMA.

2. ARMY SECRETARY ALEXANDER AND I HAD HOUR AND HALF VISIT
WITH GENERAL TORRIJOS FRIDAY ON CONTADORA. IT WAS A VERY FRANK AND
OPEN DISCUSSION. GENERAL WAS IN GOOD MOOD AND ATMOSPHERE WAS VERY
FRIENDLY. TORRIJOS WAS ACCOMPANIED BY FOREIGN MINISTER
GOLZALEZ-REVILLA AND CONFIDANT RORY GONZALEZ.

3. HIGH POINT OF SESSION WAS TORRIJOS' EXPRESSION OF HIS
WILLINGNESS TO APPROVE SOME FORM OF BILATERAL SECURITY GUARANTEE
FOR THE POST-TREATY PERIOD. IN RETURN, HOWEVER, HE SAID
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U.S. WOULD HAVE TO BE CONSIDERABLY MORE FORTHCOMING THAN IT
HAS BEEN TO DATE REGARDING LANDS AND FACILITIES THAT WOULD BE
PASSED TO PANAMA UNDER TREATY. HE TALKED EMPHATICALLY ON PANAMA'S
REQUIREMENT FOR PORT AREAS ON ATLANTIC AND PACIFIC SIDES, UNDERLIN-
ING HIS DESIRE FOR AREA ADJACENT TO FREE ZONE IN COLON FOR
CONSTRUCTION OF A CONTAINER PORT.

4. TORRIJOS SAID HE FELT ONLY SENSIBLE WAY TO HANDLE TRANSFERS OF LAND AND WATERS AND FACILITIES WAS ON A FIXED REVERSION SCHEDULE. HE SAID HE NEEDED TO BE ABLE TO POINT OUT TO HIS PEOPLE THAT PANAMA WOULD BE GETTING AREAS OF SIGNIFICANT USE AND VALUE TO THEM--SOME IMMEDIATELY, SOME IN THE YEAR X, SOME IN YEAR Y, ETCETERA. HE SAID HE HAD THE FEELING THAT U.S. NEGOTIATORS DID NOT AS OF NOW HAVE THE AUTHORITY TO MAKE THE KINDS OF DECISIONS THAT HE THOUGHT WERE REQUIRED TO GET A SUCCESSFUL TREATY. HE SAID THERE HAD BEEN ENTIRELY TOO MUCH CONCENTRATION ON QUOTE TRIVIA UNQUOTE IN PAST NEGOTIATING SESSIONS. HE TOLD US WHAT WAS NEEDED WAS A QUOTE COMMAND DECISION UNQUOTE TO MOVE FORWARD TOWARD RAPID SETTLEMENT OF THE MAJOR ISSUES AND THE MINOR POINTS WOULD THEN FALL INTO PLACE.

5. SECRETARY ALEXANDER POINTED OUT TO THE GENERAL THAT HE WAS NEW IN HIS JOB AND HAD NOT YET HAD AN OPPORTUNITY TO LOOK INTO THE DETAILS OF SUCH ISSUES AS DISPOSITION OF LANDS AND WATERS. HE ALSO REMINDED TORRIJOS THAT HE WAS NOT ENGAGED DIRECTLY IN THE NEGOTIATIONS, THAT THEY WERE IN THE HANDS OF OUR ABLE NEGOTIATORS BUNKER AND LINOWITZ. BUT HE PROMISED THE GENERAL THAT HE WOULD PROMPTLY UNDERTAKE A THOROUGH REVIEW OF THE ARMY'S AND CANAL COMPANY'S POSITIONS ON THESE MATTERS TO SEE IF THE U.S. COULD NOT BE MORE FORTHCOMING. TORRIJOS WELCOMED THIS PLEDGE.

6. TORRIJOS SAID THAT HE WAS UNDER HEAVY PRESSURES FOR MOVEMENT IN THE TREATY TALKS. ABOVE ALL HE SAID HE NEEDED TO KNOW IF WE REALLY INTENDED TO PRESS FORWARD TOWARD A TREATY OR IF THE SLOW PACE AND INDECISIVE NATURE OF RECENT SESSIONS WAS GOING TO

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CONTINUE. HE SAID HE WOULD RATHER KNOW THAT A TREATY WAS IMPOSSIBLE THAN TO HAVE THE TALKS DRIFT ALONG AT A SNAIL'S PACE. ARMY SECRETARY AND I BOTH ASSURED HIM THAT IT WAS CLEARLY THE PRESIDENT'S POLICY AND THE EXPECTATION OF THE SECRETARY OF STATE AND THE NEGOTIATORS TO WORK TOWARD A TREATY WILL ALL DELIBERATE SPEED. WE REMINDED HIM OF THE CONSIDERABLE PROBLEMS WE HAVE WITH CONGRESS AND WITH PUBLIC OPINION. HE SAID HE UNDERSTOOD THOSE PROBLEMS AND APPRECIATED THEIR DEPTH. THAT WAS THE MAIN REASON FOR HIS ASSURANCE THAT A SATISFACTORY SOLUTION COULD AND WOULD BE FOUND TO THE POST-TREATY SECURITY PROBLEM. HE THEN REMINDED US THAT HE HAD MAJOR PROBLEMS, TOO, WHICH HE HOPED WE UNDERSTOOD AND SYMPATHIZED WITH. WE TOLD HIM WE DID.

NOTE BY OC/T: NOT PASSED ABOVE ADDRESSEE.

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C O N F I D E N T I A L SECTION 2 OF 2 PANAMA 1982

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7. TORRIJOS SAID THAT IF A SETTLEMENT WAS GOING TO BE PROLONGED, IT WOULD BE HELPFUL IF THE U.S. COULD UNDERTAKE TO MAKE SOME GESTURES TO PANAMA IN THE FORM OF TRANSFERS OF SOME SIGNIFICANT REAL ESTATE. HE REFERRED SPECIALLY TO NEW FRANCE FIELD AND THE COCO SOLA AREAS. HE NOTED WITH EXTREME PUZZLEMENT THAT QUOTE THE U.S. SAYS IT WILL GIVE US THE FIELD BUT WANTS TO KEEP THE HANGERS UNQUOTE. HE SAID THAT WAS LIKE HIS QUOTE OFFERING US A TEN-STORY BUILDING WITHOUT STAIRS OR AN ELEVATOR UNQUOTE. HE ALSO SAID THAT IT WOULD BE MUCH BETTER IF THE U.S. WERE TO TAKE THE INITIATIVE IN THIS MATTER AND TAKE SOME OF THESE UNILATERAL ACTIONS. QUOTE WE DON'T WANT TO BE IN THE POSITION OF COMING TO YOU TO BEG FOR SUCH THINGS UNQUOTE HE SAID.

8. TORRIJOS SAID THAT WHILE HE WAS WILLING TO MAKE MAJOR CONCESSIONS ON SECURITY QUESTIONS--DURING AND AFTER A TREATY-- HE THOUGHT THE SECRETARY SHOULD UNDERSTAND HIS REAL ATTITUDE TOWARD THIS MATTER. HE SAID THAT FRANKLY THERE WAS NO SECURITY FOR THE CANAL QUOTE AGAINST TWO MEN OR AGAINST A MAJOR POWER UNQUOTE. HE SAID EVERY EXPERIENCED MILITARY MAN UNDERSTOOD THAT. HE RECOGNIZED THAT THIS WAS A POLITICAL NOT A MILITARY PROBLEM AND IT WAS ONE HE UNDERSTOOD FULL WELL.

9. THAT WAS THE HEART OF THE DISCUSSION. THERE WAS A CERTAIN AMOUNT OF UNRELEASED TALK. FOR EXAMPLE, HE PRAISED PRESIDENT CARTER HIGHLY FOR HIS STAND ON HUMAN RIGHTS. HE SAID THE U.S.
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SHOULD REGARD THE REACTIONS OF SUCH COUNTRIES AS BRAZIL, URUGUAY AND GUATEMALA AS QUOTE A COMPLIMENT UNQUOTE. HE ALSO SPOKE OF THE URGENT NEED FOR SOME KIND OF WORLD-WIDE APPROACH TO THE PROBLEMS OF COMMODITY TRADE. HE SAID HE WAS

CONSIDERING ASKING UN SECRETARY WALDHEIM TO ORGANIZE SOME KIND OF INTERNATIONAL COMMISSION TO WORK ON A MORE EQUITABLE SYSTEM OF COMMODITY EXCHANGE BETWEEN DEVELOPING AND DEVELOPED COUNTRIES. IT WAS CLEAR FROM THE CONTEXT THAT TORRIJOS PRINCIPAL CONCERN IN THIS REGARD IS THE TERRIBLE BIND THAT PANAMA FINDS ITSELF IN NOW BECAUSE OF EXCESSIVELY AMBITIOUS SUGAR PRODUCTION. (HE SAID THE WORLD PRICE WAS EIGHT CENTS AND THAT IT COST PANAMA AT LEAST 12 CENTS TO PRODUCE REFINED SUGAR. SO, HE SAID, HE WAS GOING TO HAVE TO LET CONSIDERABLE CANE ROT IN THE FIELDS.)

10. TORRIJOS ALSO SPOKE OF HIS UNEMPLOYMENT PROBLEM. HE SAID IT WAS NOW NINE PER CENT IN PANAMA CITY (WE THINK IT IS HIGHER). HE SAID IF IT REACHED TWENTY PER CENT QUOTE WE CAN FORGET ABOUT STABILITY, ABOUT PROGRESS AND ABOUT NEGOTIATIONS UNQUOTE.

11. THE TALK WAS UNUSUALLY CANDID AND GOOD HUMORED. TORRIJOS WAS IN EXCELLENT SPIRITS AND THOUGH GENERALLY SERIOUS, HE SHOWED FLASHES OF HUMOR. IT WAS CLEAR THAT HE AND THE ARMY SECRETARY HAD ESTABLISHED

EXCELLENT RAPPORT AND THAT HE APPRECIATED ALEXANDER'S HONESTY AND CANDOR. DURING THE EVENING, IN THE MIDST OF A RECEPTION FOR VISITING CONGRESSMEN, I RECEIVED A CALL FROM THE FOREIGN MINISTER WHO SAID THAT TORRIJOS WANTED ME TO KNOW HOW MUCH HE ENJOYED GETTING SECRETARY ALEXANDER AND THAT HE WAS THOROUGHLY PLEASED WITH THEIR TALK.

JORDEN

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